

A Hybrid Oak at Westerleigh, Staten Island

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While making observations on the seventeen-year Cicada on June 12, 1928, the writer was pleased to come upon an interesting hybrid oak on the northerly side of Chandler Ave. about one hundred feet from Jewett Ave. at Westerleigh, Staten Island. In laying out the first named avenue several years ago, the tree, which is close to what will be a side walk, was cut off about one foot above the ground leaving a low stump one foot four inches in circumference from which about a dozen shoots have since grown up, some of them to a height of about seven feet. One of the shoots is five and three quarters inches in circumference and seven feet two inches high. The foliage of this tree is remarkable and is that of the celebrated *Quercus heterophylla* Michx., which is supposed to be, and probably is, a hybrid between the red oak *Quercus rubra*, and the willow oak *Quercus phellos*. There are however, no known willow oaks anywhere near Westerleigh, nor are they to be expected in that part of the Island. The hybrid is evidently a native of the semi-wooded area where it stands today. Its trunk is within seven inches of that of a larger red oak with normal leaves and acorns; some of the latter, produced in 1927, I found on the ground. The leaves on the hybrid are thin and like those of a red oak, only much narrower, while many others are small and in shape like those of the willow oak.

This interesting tree will probably soon be completely destroyed by the widening of Chandler Ave., or the building of a house on the lot where it grows. How it got in its present position, so far removed from the willow oaks at the other end of the Island thirteen miles away, is a mystery. The nearest *Quercus heterophylla* is an introduced specimen growing in the Clove Valley on the westerly side of Britton's Upper pond, about one and a half miles away, on land now included in the city park area. This tree came from an acorn planted by the writer in October, 1888, and has now attained a considerable size, being four feet eight inches in circumference three feet from the ground. An account of it by Dr. Arthur



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Hollick is given in the Pro. S. I. Assn. of Arts and Sciences.¹ Since 1917 it has been examined by several nature clubs in their visits to the Clove Valley, and it is probably the most noteworthy tree on Staten Island owned by the city of New York in its park lands.

The acorn from which the Clove Valley hybrid oak grew came from near Bedell Ave., close to the present Boulevard, and between Richmond Valley and the Billopp House. There are a number of hybrid oaks still standing at that locality that were discovered by the writer in 1888, and have since been visited by botanists on numerous occasions. They are described in the Proceedings of the Natural Science Association of Staten Island in September and October, 1888—and further noted in subsequent issues.

In the Proceedings of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences for October, 1918, there is an illustrated paper on "A Second Station for Hybrid Oaks on the Western End of Staten Island," wherein two additional trees of *Quercus heterophylla* are recorded as growing near the railroad station at Richmond Valley, but to the north of the tracks. At that time each of these trees was nearly four feet in circumference about three feet from the ground. I am pleased to state that they are still standing.

The discovery of hybrid oaks on the westerly end of the Island where the willow oak has been one of the parents, is not nearly as remarkable as the finding of a tree like the one at Westerleigh so far removed from any known tree of that species. How it came to be there cannot at present be explained.

¹ Vol. VII, pp. 32-44, October, 1917, with photographs of the tree.